DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 035 CS 210 134

AUTHOR Bishop, Wendy
TITLE Research, Theory, and Pedagogy of Peer Writing Groups: An Annotated Bibliography.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; Classroom Environment; *Cooperation; Higher Education; Participative Decision Making; *Peer Evaluation; *Peer Groups; Peer Influence; Peer Teaching; *Teaching Methods; Tutoring; Writing Evaluation; *Writing Processes; *Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Collaborative Writing

ABSTRACT

Noting that, in general, collaborative peer writing groups benefit students but that teacher and student preparation would improve the efficacy of collaborative writing method, this bibliography provides detailed information on sources useful for introducing writing students to the vocabulary and terminology of the composition community. Materials cited include books, essays in books, journal articles, dissertations, speeches, and research reports. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED276035

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Wendy Bishop
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Wendy Bishop
University of Alaska
Fairbanks AK 99775

Research, Theory, and Pedagogy of Peer Writing Groups: An Annotated Bibliography

Introduction

The value of using peer writing groups as a teaching method if not overrated has sometimes been oversimplified. A brief review of current research and practice shows this. In general, collaborative peer writing groups do benefit the student. The claims for the efficacy of the method are many and various. Beavan (1977), discussing peer evaluation, claims that the collaborative method allows students to develop audience awareness, to check their perceptions of reality, to strengthen their interpersonal skills, and to take risks; the entire process results in improvement in writing and students' ability to revise. Hawkins (1977) agrees that students strengthen their interpersonal skills and risk-taking or creative abilities.

Bruffee (1978) found that peer tutors and tutees at work in a collaborative environment deal with higher order concerns such as paper focus and development. Tutees feel comfortable enough with peers to bring up these concerns which go beyond the usage level, and the writing abilities of tutors also improves as a direct result of the collaborative writing act. Researchers like Danis (1980), who found that 75% of the students in her study correctly identified both major and minor writing problems, and Gere (1982), who felt that student responses (grades five to twelve) did deal with meaning, would seem to support Bruffee's contention that students in peer groups do more than simply act

CS 210 134

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

as proofreaders of each other's work. Recent research by Gere and Abbott (1985) has reaffirmed the power of peer writing groups to stay focussed on discussions about writing. Their research also shows that group discussions where teachers are present are significantly different from those in which teachers are absent.

Drawbacks to the method must be noted. First, collaborative learning can be time consuming (Beaven 1977; Abercrombie 1974), for those writing about this method agree that some training of group members is necessary. Beaven also notes that some instructors are unable to allow students the freedom required (student rather than teacher centered, discussion rather than lecture dominated classrooms) and therefore end up doing double work, designing and controlling, directing and correcting the groups. This problem seems to be one of teacher awareness and training rather than an inherent flaw in the method.

A final criticism develops from close research observation of groups and from student evaluations. Danis (1982) found that students are not always sure of their group role, aren't able to stand back from their own writing, don't know what they want to know, and have a reluctance to offer critical comments. Flynn (1982) felt students lacked critical ability and attributed this to students' tendencies to supply missing information in a paper in order to make sense out of what they were reading. Again, these are problems that can be somewhat alleviated by student and teacher preparation for the method. The fact that students

do need to develop a critical vocabulary from which to discuss their works is supported in Bruffee's articles (1983; 1984) concerning the importance of language communities. Clearly, there is a need to introduce writing students to the vocabulary and terminology of the composition community.

Bibliography

Abercrombie, M.L.J. (1974). Aims and techniques of group teaching (3rd ed.). London: Society for Research into Higher Education Ltd.

Abercrombie defines group teaching and distinguishes between lecture, tutorial, and group methods. She reviews research that proves that factual material can be learned by group learning methods, and then offers a review of the LTD or Learning Thru Discussion Method developed by Hill (1969) which offers a highly structured method for implementing group work. She later discusses Collier's work with syndicate (small group) teaching. Having discussed the basis for and several current methods of implementing group learning, she spends several chapters reviewing issues in group learning: peer tutoring, training in human relations, team work, groups for developing creativity, learning to teach in groups, and so on.

The appendix is a transcript of an actual "first session" in peer group work for architectural design students conducted by Abercrombie and Terry. It is actually a paper within a paper, reporting and analyzing group behavior in this session.

Beaven, Mary H. (1977). Individualized goal setting, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation. In C.R. Cooper & L. Odell (Eds.), Evaluating writing: Describing, measuring, judging (pp. 135-156). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Mary Beaven bases her approach to evaluation on two premises: growth in writing is a highly individual (and often slow) process, and many methods used to optimize personality growth also optimize growth in writing. Her second premise is formed directly from the work of Virginia Axline and Carl Rogers. Her suggestions for developing peer evaluation among writing students depend upon the instructor developing a climate for sharing among peers in groups. Students begin by working in

pairs, then in small sets of changing groups, then in assigned groups, and finally in self chosen groups which work on sustained projects. Whenever necessary, groups return to an earlier configuration of group work. She feels the most successful work occurs when students stay in the same group for a period of time and work in a fairly unstructured environment.

Beaven feels the groups need a period of training. During a discussion of shared student drafts, comments and questions, the teacher focuses on the differences in responses. Students come to expect and appreciate differences; that is, a climate of trust and sharing has been established. Teachers also provide students with questions for peer evaluations and rating scales. She suggests a progression in the evaluation process. First peer evaluation using rating scales, next using student generated topics and goals for writing improvement chosen from prepared lists, and, finally, using a few generalized questions included in her article (149). The progression is that of structured evaluations to less structured evaluations.

Citing research, Beaven justifies peer evaluation as a method that lets students develop audience awareness, check their perceptions of reality, strengthen interpersonal skills needed for collaboration and cooperation, and feel encouraged to take risks in their writing. She also lists the advantages and disadvantages of this method. Students are able to use written language more effectively, respond more favorably to peer models, and revise more readily. In addition, the teacher is relieved of grading hours, allowing students to write more frequently with immediate feedback while teachers have more time for individualized instruction and conferencing. However, group processes take a great deal of time and many teachers do not trust the process and end up doing "double" work, directing and correcting. Some teachers are unable to allow students freedom and to facilitate group work.

Bruffee, K. (1978, December). The Brooklyn plan: Attaining intellectual growth through peer group tutoring. Liberal Education, 64, 447-469.

Citing David Klaus' research on the effectiveness of peer tutoring programs and the report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, chaired by J.S. Coleman, which recommended peer tutoring as one of several useful teaching activities, Bruffee details the peer tutoring program initiated at Brooklyn College, N.Y.C. By participating in the program, students learn to practice analytic and valuative judgement collaboratively through tasks applied to each other's expository writing. It was begun as an alternative to an under used non-peer staffed campus writing center. When peer tutors were trained for and used for staffing the center, tutoring encounters increased dramatically. Students brought in not grammar and usage problems but problems in organization, focus, etc.

Unexpectedly, the peer tutors' own writing improved (they did extensive amounts of writing during training); it appeared that not only was there the expected improvement in the writing of basic writers but also in that of average or above average writers. Bruffee feels the program succeeds in the diverse, minority and commuter student population at Brooklyn College because the tutors and tutees are deeply engaged in this writing process and desire to improve.

Brufee reviews early work by M.L.J. Abercrombie exploring peer influence from which he extracts important strengths and weakness of the peer tutoring method. Peer work is useful when students know information but cannot apply what they know. It improves students' overall diagnostic abilities. On the other hand, peer work cannot help students acquire new information or acquire new skills from scratch and only works if tutors or groups are correctly guided, otherwise peer groups have a conservative effect. That is, students either refuse to criticize or refuse to value writing.

A description of Brooklyn College's tutor training class is included. Bruffee supports (a) self-initiated writing topics, (b) reading papers aloud, (c) work groups (he is vague on how to form them), and (d) the use of critique sheets wherein students describe papers, state writing strengths, and suggest improvements, all supported with evidence from the paper under consideration. An added benefit of the critiquing is that critique writing, for the tutors, is "real" writing in the fullest sense, writing with a purpose, for a particular audience, and so on. Program results after five years are reported as (1) an increase in students' ability to conceptualize, and (2) development of a setting in which students experience the power of ideas, and (3) an opportunity for tutors to learn objectivity and intellectual humility.

Bruffee, K. A. (1983). Writing and reading as collaborative or social acts. In J.L. Hays, et al. (Eds.), The writer's mind: Writing as a mode of thinking. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Bruffee uses the work of L.S. Vygotsky and Thomas Kuhn to redefine the relationship between readers and writers and reading and writing. He replaces the traditional model of reader/writer relationships (adversarial and one-to-one) with a collaborative model based on Vygotsky's research findings which suggest that young children are always working collaboratively, often with themselves, as they talk through problems to arrive at solutions. This instrumental use of language gives human interactions an essentially collaborative nature.

Instrumental speech is also important to Kuhn's theory of conceptual growth. In order to join a community of peers, those outside the community must acquire the community's language. To both Vygotsky and Kuhn, speech accompanies and is part of practical activities. Bruffee, for the sake of his discussion,

defines writing as talking to another person in a focussed and coherent way. By analogy to Vygotsky, he explains that writers must talk through their writing and, hence, must participate in collaborative learning when in an institutional learning situation. He poses collaborative writing as a new, more effective and more realistic paradigm, opposing it to the traditionally silent model usually associated with reading and writing. In addition, there is a need for this new peer community to acquire a specialized language, a metalanguage, with which it can discuss its activities.

In calling reading and writing "displaced social or collaborative acts," Bruffee also calls for the use of imagination in writing. The writer would need to imaginatively recreate the displaced social environment. Bruffee ends with a discussion of research areas opened up by this model. The article is speculative and thought provoking.

Bruffee, K. A. (1984, November). Collaborative learning and the conversation of mankind. College English, 46, 635-652.

This essay takes up where Bruffee's article "Writing and Reading as Collaborative or Social Acts" leaves off, extending and clarifying his ideas about the relationship of conversation to composition. In addition to citing Kuhn and Vygotsky, Bruffee introduces the work of Stanley Fish which describes the manner in which "interpretive communities" influence thought and the work of Richard Rorty which is based on that of Kuhn. As Bruffee explains:

> If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized. (641)

To insure that student talk meets an instructor's writing goals for students, Bruffee suggests that adequate talk can best be developed through collaborative learning. Based on Rorty's work, he then distinguishes between "normal" discourse and "abnormal discourse."

For Bruffee, normal discourse is that which takes place within a community of peers. Teaching normal discourse to students is essential in order to assure them access to the composition writing community. In addition, all students have something to contribute to peer discourse and, hence, something to learn from shared discourse. He feels that such a situation will not lead to uninformed students talking to uninformed students so long as such learning is directed and structured by a teacher. He defends collaborative learning from those who might think it is a radical, paradigm destroying process:

> Rorty, following Kuhn, argues that communities of knowledgeable peers make knowledge by a process of

> socially justifying belief. Collaborative learning models this process. (644)

That is, collaborative learning in a normal discourse situation does this.

Collaborative learning can also create new knowledge through the use of creatively used "abnormal discourse." Abnormal discourse can not be taught but can be fostered. It allows us to see the provinciality or stuffiness of a discourse community and to change it. This is a new idea for Bruffee. In "The Brooklyn Plan: Attaining Intellectual Growth Through Peer Group Tutoring" he reviews the work of M.L.J. Abercrombie who claims that collaborative learning cannot create new knowledge. It appears that the use of abnormal discourse in a collaborative setting would not allay the fears of those who worry about paradigm destruction. Bruffee argues that a teacher should not be threatened by abnormal discourse but foster both types of discourse and that both types are necessary and occur with most effect in the collaborative learning situation.

Collier, G. (Ed.). (1983). The management of peer-group learning: Syndicate methods in higher education. London: Society for Research into Higher Education. ERIC ED 246-699.

This British publication collects a variety of articles dealing with the syndicate (small group) method of instruction. The introduction by Gerald Collier is comprehensive, describing the syndicate method, and theory and research supporting the use of a syndicate model. Nine authors write about the effectiveness of the method in a variety of teaching areas (French literature to engineering courses) when used to organize the entire course or when used as a class component. Other chapters discuss the method's effect on examinations, the tutor's (instructor's) role, the state of the art of the method, and guidelines for a new practitioner of the technique. Suggestions for further research are also included. The book offers a comprehensive overview of the syndicate method as practiced in Great Britain and as it is being taken up and refined by American instructors.

The appendix includes teaching documents such as a syllabus and course description for an advanced expository writing class at the University of Washington. The instructor, Charles Shuster, includes copies of handouts he gives to students: guidelines for setting up a writing group; advice to the writer; and advice to listeners.

Craig, B. J. (1981). Oral response groups before and after rough drafts: Effects on writing achievement and apprehension. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 3476A. (University Microfilms No. 8201445)

Craig explores oral response at three different class junctures. In the traditional method, the entire class critiques finished papers. In the talk-write method, students talk over initial paper ideas in small groups. In the think-write-talk-rewrite method, students share rough drafts. Differences in writing measures (papers) were examined at the third, sixth and ninth weeks of a semester to see if changes in writing skills can be attributed to a particular method.

The researcher took twelve classes of freshman writers and randomly assigned them to treatment groups in the above three categories. Eight students were randomly chosen from each class. For these students, third and sixth and ninth week papers (personal narrative, classification or process and persuasion, respectively) were collected, as were writing apprehension surveys, during the first and last week of class.

The papers were scored by trained raters but the interrater reliability was low (.616) and there appeared to be a rater bias against later rhetorical modes (Craig's suggestion) as scores declined. Craig also reported a variation of teaching methods among the twelve instructors as reported verbally.

There was no significant effect of response groups and no effect between papers and treatment. The research would need to be replicated with a stronger control for rater and instructor variability. The original division by types of method seems useful and worth further investigation
(Reviewed from abstract)

Danis, M.F. (1980). Peer-response groups in a college writing workshop: Students' suggestions for revising compositions. Dissertation Abstracts International, 41, 5008A-5009A.

The researcher was interested in investigating peer discussions as they actually occur in writing workshops. Peer group sessions in one nineteen week sophomore level writing workshop were taped and transcribed and supplemented with interviews with the students involved and with questionnaires filled out by those students. Based on a system devised by Deiderich in Measuring Growth in English, discussions were analyzed for content and group interaction patterns.

Findings: A. Students demonstrated an implicit awareness of the features of academic writing. B. 90% of student suggestions were accurate (as judged by the researcher's reading of their papers); 60% were acted upon producing improvements in papers. C. 75% of the students identified that there were major problems or that there were only minor problems. D. There was no formal group leadership. E. Groups evolved a common critical language. F. Students changed (pre/post) from apprehensive to appreciative of the method. G. As reported in questionnaires, students increased in writing confidence.

Students reported the following weaknesses of the method: imbalance of critical and writing abilities in some groups, tendency to drift from the task at hand, and a reluctance to offer negative comments. Students cited both group work and instructor guidance as contributing to their improved attitude. (Reviewed from abstract)

Danis, F. (1982, March). Weaving the web of meaning: Interaction patterns in peer-response groups. Paper presented at the annual meeting of CCCC, San Francisco, CA. ERIC Document ED 214 202

Based on ethnographic research into writing work groups (see "Peer-Response Groups in a College Writing Workshop: Students' Suggestions for Revising Compositions"), the author looks specifically at how groups develop patterns of critical thoughts. Writers in freshman composition peer groups, developed four main types of interactions with each other. They (1) asked questions about their essays, (2) proposed their own suggestions for revising, (3) expressed agreement or disagreement with recommendations by peers, and (4) explained intentions behind stylistic choices they had made. The author offered the following interpretation of the motives behind each type of interaction and the effectiveness of each type of response based on extensive analysis of taped group discussions.

Type one interactions gave students permission to criticize, elicited reassurance or clarification of feedback as to how the writer had affected the reader and how the writing could be improved. Interactions in this category resulted in group discussions.

Type two interactions were sometimes a method of asking for feedback and sometimes a method that allowed a writer to talk to him or herself. Usually, this technique resulted in group approval and elicited little discussion.

Type three interactions allowed students to express agreement; expressed agreement often ended discussions and was the most common response. Expressed disagreement was much less common and had two types of results: discussion ended or really opened up.

Type four interactions, when useful, allowed writers to see differences in their intentions and their actions. When less useful, this type of interaction overwhelmed the group and got in the way of group discussion.

The author concludes that writers are not always sure of their group role, aren't able to stand outside of their own writing, don't know what they want to know about their own writing, don't regard peers as a real audience if they are still writing for themselves, avoid asking for criticism even from a trusted peer group, and won't ask for clarification, sometimes in order to avoid criticism. These conclusions have important

implications. Danis suggests that to develop useful group interactions, there should be instruction on the nature and purpose of criticism and the dynamics of group participation and that this should be modeled individually and with the whole class. Second, teachers should provide clear, explicit directions for the critiquing process. Third, teachers should reflect with students on the progress of the critiquing groups through the use of group logs, tapes, and so on. The paper raises some interesting problems of peer group training, especially in the area of developing successful group dynamics.

Elbow, P. (1981). Writing with power. New York: Oxford University Press.

Elbow gives suggestions for writers interested in setting up a peer support group. He describes the purpose of such a group and details a method (272-277). First members should share and get feedback. They should read work simply to participate, eventually bringing in drafts for critical responses. A group should give equal time to each member, perhaps by electing one member a time keeper. Although a group leader may also be elected, Elbow stresses the importance of each writer taking charge of his own time for sharing writing in order to ensure that all group members offer comments on that writing. He avoids the leader issue by suggesting that a monitor should be elected. The monitor would keep time, stop arguments, prevent time hogging, point out to a writer the occasions when he or she is not listening, and so on; all of these appear to be "leader-like" functions. He suggests that the group participate in a five minute end of session summary. In an earlier chapter, Elbow describes sharing as one of the cornerstones of the writing process and his chapter on peer work is set forth as a method for enhancing sharing.

Flynn, E. A. (1982, March). Freedom, restraint and peer group interaction. Paper presented at the annual meeting of CCCC, San Francisco. ERIC Document ED 216 365

In this exploratory study to determine if peer critiquing is effective and how students read and critique classmates' writing, Flynn examined the critique sheets of ten students in a freshman composition course. She drew the students from three different peer groups. The students responded to two argumentative essays written by other group members. Flynn's tentative conclusions suggest that student readers do not always offer adequate feedback and are too accepting of unfocused or insubstantial essays because they bring expectations of focus and substantiality to essays, thus, using a reading method that sees beyond problems or compensates for problems. Instead of pointing out where papers have broken down, where writers have

neglected to supply adequate meaning, readers interpreted the papers for the writer, supplying needed meaning. Flynn attributes this to a hesitancy on the part of these readers to be critical but also feels that it is due to their learned abilities to read coherant, well-organized texts (primarily college text books). It is possible that students needed to be introduced to the "genre" of student essays.

On the ten students' sample critique sheets, very few critical remarks were recorded. Students were able to recognize paper strengths and to identify main idea, audience, and supporting evidence but were enthusiastic about essays lacking in focus or essays that were poorly organized, and they found almost all the papers convincing. When they did mention a lack of evidence, writers receiving such critiques responded with useful changes in subsequent drafts. However, papers written with an overriding tone of authority or loaded with specific (although not necessarily well integrated or organized) details were treated as complete. That such papers often lacked controlling ideas or contained extraneous details was not noted.

Flynn feels that a lack of familiarity with incoherent texts on the part of these student critics interferes with their ability to recognize writing problems. She finds support for this in the theories of Frank Smith. In Understanding Reading, Smith describes reading as a process of looking for meaning, as Flynn's student critics appear to have done when reading group member's essays. Teaching practices that encourage students to look for main ideas and support material in essays ignore teaching students to look for extraneous material and unclear areas in writing. Most teacher or class generated critique sheets emphasize such a focus, including Flynn's in this study.

In concluding, Flynn notes that a teacher's comments are important to the success of a peer group or an individual writer, not to impose authority, but to offer the opinion of someone with a great deal of exposure to student essays in order to keep student critics from reading in meaning when they should be encouraging writers to revise and strengthen their papers. Although this conclusion is carefully worded, the implication is that the student must be taught the correct models for writing and will not develop naturally acceptable models through peer group interactions.

Flynn, E. A., et al., (1982, November 19-24). Effects of peer critiquing and model analysis on the quality of biology student laboratory reports. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Washington, DC. ERIC Document ED 234 403

The authors studied the effectiveness of peer critiquing and the use of teaching models in improving the quality of laboratory reports written by sophomore biology majors. The study was the

result of a writing across the curriculum inservice which generated interest in the method.

The reference group of two classes of biology students was taught in the traditional way. They were provided with a report outline but no guidance. One treatment group of two additional biology classes was prepared for writing reports through training in peer critiquing and model analysis. A second treatment group of one class was prepared only through the introduction of model analysis. A third treatment group of one class was prepared only through an introduction to peer critiquing. (Some classes were two quarter and some were three quarter sequenced.)

All three treatment groups scored higher than the reference groups on the primary trait assessment of the reports. However, additional testing indicated that those students who employed modeling alone (the second treatment group) wrote better reports than any group. Subjective impressions of the treatment group reports indicated the papers were better organized than those of the reference group.

Results of the study indicated that both peer critiquing and teaching models are successful methods for dealing with large enrollment content classrooms with modeling being the most effective method in this population. Student reactions confirmed the experimental results. Students indicated that they enjoyed reading professional models and critiquing published papers. Many felt that critiquing in this content course was more useful than in a freshman English course because other students in the class were more truly "peers". On the negative side, some students felt critiquing allowed other students to copy their work. The authors present the study as exploratory in nature, needing more verification. One disparity occurred in the length of time students were in courses; some groups were composed of three quarter sequenced students while others were composed of two quarter sequenced students.

Ford, B. W. (1973). The effects of peer editing/grading on the grammar-usage and theme-composition ability of college freshmen. Dissertation Abstracts International, 73, 15321.

Subjects in this research project were students in freshman English classes (25 in the control class and 25 in the experimental class) at a large state university in the midwest. The researcher wanted to determine the effect of peer editing/grading of themes on the theme writing ability of these students. Using a pre and post grammar test and the first and last of seven themes written during an eighteen week course, statistical analysis showed that students in the experimental group who edited and graded each others course themes made significantly higher gains in grammar and theme composition scores unrelated to several biographical variables. Results

indicated that peer group grading and editing were more valuable than instructor grading/editing.
(Reviewed from abstract)

Gebhardt, R. (1980, September). Teamwork and feedback: Broadening the base of collaborative writing. College English, 42, 69-74.

In this article, Gebhardt argues forcefully that most collaborative writing situations present a student with an intimidating audience of five peer evaluators who, while they do help the student with his previously written draft, intimidate the anxious, hesitant or timid writer. He feels that peer group work is rarely initiated early enough in the writing process. While he supports the ideas of Bruffee, Elbow, and Hawkes, he argues that they stress what a student learns from peer groups rather than how peer groups can help inexperienced writers deal with their feelings of loneliness, frustration, and anxiety.

Educators like Bruffee, Elbow, and Hawkes often discuss collaboration as a method for peer revision and evaluation. By broadening the collaborative base to include initial writing process stages, Gebhardt believes student writers will receive important emotional support and feedback, will find group work more truly collaborative, and will also learn those things the instructor hopes the student will learn. Specifically, he suggests that groups be used to help students locate topics, generate details, perform freewriting, clarify and focus subjects, develop a sense of audience before writing, and play devil's advocate for a student concerning subjects under development. He gives a brief description of how groups could function in each of these areas.

George, D. (1984, October). Writing with peer groups in composition. College Composition and Communication, 35, 320-336.

George's intention in this article is not to convince others of the value of peer group instruction but to discuss ways of making non-working groups perform more effectively. George regularly taped one group per class session in his ten week classes. His teaching method included replaying the tape at home, responding on tape to the session he listened to, returning the tape to his students, and asking them to respond to the tape and his spoken comments in their journals. Aside from reviewing his own tapes, he reviewed tapes of other peer group sessions from other instructor's classes in order to form a typography of peer groups.

His typography divides peer groups into three categories: task-oriented, leaderless and dysfunctional. The task oriented group is not necessarily composed of the strongest writers but

contains students willing to work and complete a task. These students will talk to and listen to each other. All members of the group become integrated into the group over time and the group is able to work in the instructor's presence.

Leaderless groups look like they are doing nothing more than rereading books or handouts; they can not function with an instructor present and they are often at the mercy of a dominant leader.

Dysfunctional groups never really group; they rarely follow directions or perform tasks and when they do undertake tasks, dysfunctional groups do them much more rapidly and superficially than the task-oriented group. Members often challenge the group method and sometimes the instructor.

Although these three types of groups are quite different, all have some problems in common. Much of what is valuable in discussions is not recorded and gets lost. Even useful suggestions from group members are often not used in student writing. Groups get distracted by ideas in an essay and end up discussing the idea rather than the writer's writing. Finally, the leaderless and dysfunctional groups usually fail to give useful advice.

George feels these problems are not surprising and that instructors often don't realize how much they are asking students to accomplish in groups. He also feels that instructors aren't prepared to cope with the variety of ways in which groups can fail. Although they can and do fail, he feels that the task-oriented groups show an enviable amount of success and he therefore offers techniques for improving the leaderless or dysfunctional groups. Students in these groups can bring questions about their own papers to sessions. Students can talk thought a paper ("recapitulation") which allows writers to indicate areas of strengths and weaknesses that the group might then discuss. Groups can listen to tapes of their sessions or conduct oral reviews of each session as the session ends. To deal with class fear of critique sessions, instructors can begin a semester or quarter by reviewing one sample set of group documents (tapes, journals, critiques sheets) with a class that is about to begin peer work.

Gere, A. R. (1982). Students' oral response to written composition. Seattle, WA: Washington University. ERIC Document ED 229 781

This study of oral and written language used in nine writing groups examined the kinds of comments students made in a peer group situation and investigated several questions of interest to the researcher: are students able to talk about writing, what kind of comments do they make, and does the language of a writing group have any effect on the composing process? Writing groups were composed of four to six members each. Two groups

were fifth grade level, four groups were eighth grade level and three groups were senior high level. These levels were chosen based on Piaget's levels of cognitive development. Ethnographic data included recordings of student's oral comments and copies of student writings and revisions which were later analyzed to trace the relationship between the comments and the writings. Based on work by Wallace Chaffee, who divides discourse into idea units--brief spurts of spontaneous language, transcripts were analyzed for idea units based on three categories of language function: directing, informing and eliciting.

Groups spent the majority of their time discussing the writing at hand and the group itself, primarily its procedures. Most comments were informative. Readers informed the writer about what they had perceived. Revision suggestions were implicit in some of these comments.

Next most common were directing comments. Students give advice assuming they could effect change. Directing language is the language of power and is generally not student language, being restricted to the teacher in the traditional classroom.

Eliciting language was used when students wanted to know something, not as a merely rhetorical technique. Unlike a traditional teacher, they did not ask questions to which they already knew answers.

The researcher felt that student responses did deal with meaning in papers and functioned as evaluations giving both implicit and explicit directions for revisions. Although the types of language used showed an average pattern (more informing than directing and more directing than eliciting), each group developed it's own unique pattern of mixing percentages of these types of languages.

Several interesting areas for future research were suggested: (1) studies of group typology: discourse patterns, group procedures, efficiency, and functions, (2) studies of group preparation, training, (3) studies of the effectiveness of writing group evaluations, (4) studies comparing teacher and student writing criteria, and (5) studies designed to enhance teacher training in peer group teaching.

Gere, A. R., & R. D. Abbot. (1985, December). Talking about writing: The language of writing groups. Research in the Teaching of English, 19, 362-381.

This is a formal reserach report of the study discussed in the Gere article above. Gere and Abbot's research affirms the power of peer writing groups to stay focussed on discussions about writing. Their research also shows that group discussions where teachers are present are significantly different from those in which teachers are absent. They studied the language of peer writing groups at the fifth grade, eighth grade, and high school level. Audio recordings of four meetings from each of nine groups were taken over a six month period. Groups followed

procedural rules derived from Elbow's work. Assignments, notes, drafts, and papers were also collected. Writing assignments included both narrative and expository tasks. Tapes of group work were transcribed and coded into idea units in three categories; comments made to inform, direct, and elicit. These idea units dealt with writing content, form, context, process, and reference.

Results showed idea units focussed overall on the content of writing, especially for narrative texts. Context was discussed more frequently at higher grade levels. For form, comments increased by grade level on narrative texts only. Overall, older students showed a markedly greater ability to talk about writing than younger students. Students spent most of their time informing each other about writing. As students participated in work groups they developed their abilities to discuss writing, often internalizing the language for doing so, and they had opportunities for rehearsing their writing as they read it aloud.

The researchers suggest that groups are a fertile source for the study of writing process, that more needs to be learned about the difference in response to narrative and expository texts, and that students' responses to teachers' opinions may also be studied usefully in the group situation. The research is thorough and provocative.

Hawkins, Thom (1976). Group inquiry techniques in teaching writing. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Hawkins' monograph presents, in an accessible handbook format, a comprehensive introduction to collaborative writing techniques in what he calls a "parceled" classroom, that is, a classroom divided into work groups of three to five students. His parceled classroom is based on the learning theories of Carl Rodgers. Hawkins feels that students in the parceled classroom engage in the same processes of behavior that Rodgers suggests are essential for significant learning to take place: personal involvement, self-initiated learning, changes in behavior and attitude, self-evaluation, and creativity. A review of the research into process oriented, student-centered classrooms, supports his development of the parceled classroom as a more realistic method for classroom instruction than traditional, lecture methods. He presents his model as a useful alternative, giving warnings of situations in which he feels it is not an effective method (for instance, in a classroom where attendance is a problem or for students who are not prepared with minimal skills upon which they can build, etc.)

The largest section of the monograph is devoted to practice. It details the planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating of a parceled classroom. A large section is devoted

to warning instructors of the difficulties of facilitating successful group interaction and giving them a variety of practical tips for motivating students to participate and to assure that all students benefit from the method. Instructors are encouraged to experiment with the method. Suggestions as to what not to do when asking questions (in order to keep the classroom student-based) are offered and a discussion of the precise role (and physical location) of the instructor in such a classroom follows. Tasks for groups are discussed in light of competitive and collaborative models. A group method questionnaire that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular group is included. Student comments about the group method which are listed at the end of the practice section support the use of a parceled classroom.

Johnson, D. W. and R. T. Johnson (1975). Learning together and alone: Cooperation, competition, and individualization. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Learning Together is a text aimed to acquaint a teacher with the differences between cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning and to support the use of cooperative learning based on the authors' research in this field. Although geared somewhat to the secondary level, it offers a clear view of issues involved with these learning models for teachers at any level. The book logically takes the reader through definitions and research in the area, debunks myths about the effectiveness of each type of learning, discusses implementation of a cooperative model and also discusses the uses of competitive and individualized learning within a cooperative model. Finally, the authors offer teaching and monitoring aids (methods of structuring class goals, check-lists, and observation instruments), evaluation mechanisms, and a discussion of teachers' concerns about the methods suggested.

Johnson, D. W. and R. T. Johnson (Oct. 1984). Cooperative small-group learning. Curriculum Report 14: 1-6. ERIC ED 249 625.

This is a concise and comprehensive overview of the cooperative small-group learning method. Although primarily intended for a primary and secondary audience, the discussion is valid at the college level. The authors define cooperative learning by reviewing three learning methods: competitive, individualistic and cooperative, pointing to their own research which shows cooperative to be the most effective although least used method in the U.S. (7-20% by their estimate). Four basic elements of this type of learning are reviewed. The first is positive interdependence in which groups establish mutual goals, divide labor, materials, and resources, assign roles, and are given

joint rewards. Face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, and the appropriate use of interpersonal and small group skills are the other basic elements.

Cooperative learning, according to the authors' research, promotes the following skills: greater mastery and retention of facts, concepts, and principles; greater development of higher level reasoning and critical thinking competencies; and greater intrinsic motivation to achieve higher expectations for success.

A plan for implementing this type of model includes determining objectives, making decisions, explaining the academic task and cooperative goal structure, monitoring and intervening, and assessing and evaluating group and individual learning. A short review of the efforts of several school districts to implement cooperative learning and a bibliography are included.

Lagana, J. R. (1972). The development, implementation, and evaluation of a model for teaching composition which utilizes individualized learning and peer grouping. Dissertation Abstracts International, 73, 04127.

Lagana's study was desiged to research the usefulness of a composition model utilizing individualized learning and peer groupings for tenth grade students. The treatment group consisted of thirty students and the treatment consisted of four phases (a) orientation--STEP writing test diagnostic, (b) individualized learning phase - materials were provided that correspond to students' diagnosed weaknesses (c) peer group phase - students were permanently grouped in groups of five with an attempt to balance groups for weak and strong writers, and (d) conference phase - students met with a teacher to assess individual and group progress and to assign a class grade. The control group of thirty students was taught by a traditional teacher-centered method.

As evidenced by STEP writing tests, greater gains occurred in the treatment group in the areas of originality, critical thinking and appropriateness while the control group gained in the area of conventions. The treatment group showed more significant results in the STEP Essay test. (This was somewhat ambiguously worded in the abstract.) Subjective observation data and a student questionnaire supported claims that groups interacted harmoniously. Students reported that their most difficult task was criticizing peer writings. The treatment group responded more favorably than the control group on the questionnaire discussing the method of instruction.

Lagana concluded that peer evaluation is as effective as teacher evaluation and reduces the need for extensive teacher correction of essays. The method also allows students to complete more composition with more immediate feedback than in the traditional approach.
(Reviewed from abstract)

Lowenthal, B. (1981). Effect of small-group instruction on language-delayed preschoolers. Exceptional Children, 48, 178-179.

Lowenthal's study was designed to determine if small-group instruction would improve language performance more than large group instruction.

Forty language delayed subjects, aged 39-60 months, in a preschool for language-delayed children were divided into the following groups: two large control groups of ten subjects each and six small or experimental groups of three to four subjects each. (Language deficiencies occurred in articulation, receptive and expressive language, and overall ability to communicate effectively.) Students were taught for fifteen minutes per day, five days a week, for six months. The curriculum was purposefully eclectic, including vocabulary, classification, description, and following direction activities. Pre and post language and IQ testing was followed by statistical analysis of scores, including analysis of covariance.

Results indicated that small group instruction improved the oral language of language-delayed preschoolers regardless of sex or age. There were gains in vocabulary, auditory comprehension, verbal ability and overall language scores over that of subjects in the control groups.

Ritchie, J. S. (1983). An analysis of small group response in the writing process of ninth grade students. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 1011A-1021A. (University Microfilms No. DA8318677)

Using ethnographic methods, Ritchie studied a writing classroom for a semester, tape recording responses of peer groups, selecting responses from a single group for analysis and recording student and teacher perceptions concerning the small group response method. Student responses in groups varied in variety and complexity. Students were able to combine peer, teacher and their own values of good writing in their work. Responses seemed to have the following results: regulated group activity, supported social interaction, encouraged writers, reflected back to students their own writing content and quality, and enabled students to explore writing alternatives. (Reviewed from abstract)

Rogers, C. R. (1961). On becoming a person. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Rogers learning theories have influenced many researchers and teachers working with peer groups. A number of his articles

on this subject are gathered together in this influential book. Of particular interest is Part IV, "What Are the Implications for Living," which includes seven chapters in which Rogers introduces and discusses his student-centered learning theories.

In Chapter 13, Rogers makes a series of statements about teaching and discusses the implications of those statements. "I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated behavior," and "I find it very rewarding to learn, in groups, in relationships with one person as in therapy, or by myself," (276) are representative. These statements are of great interest and concern to the teaching profession for, if true (as many who have followed Rogers' work feel they are), they would require substantial restructuring of educational thought. Rogers discusses the possibility of doing away with grades and credits, and so on.

In Chapter 14, Rogers discusses the criteria necessary for significant learning to take place, based on his work in psycotherapy. Chapter 15 is a report from a former student-participant (Dr. Samuel Tennenbaum) of a Rogers conducted, student-centered class on the effectiveness of such a teaching method.

Chapter 15, in which Rogers begins to develop a theory of creativity by defining creativity and differentiating between destructive and constructive creativity, has particular application to group work. In group work, students are developing new, productive and creative communities. Rogers offers suggestions on what conditions would best foster constructive creativity: psychological safety (individuals are accepted as being of unconditional worth, a non-evaluative climate is provided, empathetic understanding is fostered) and psychological freedom (teachers allow students complete freedom of symbolic expression). Rogers redefines freedom here to mean freedom without softness, freedom with responsibility.

Rogers' ideas about student-centered learning and creativity have already been woven into the fabric of research and theory of peer group work but reading source materials such as these can still be a fruitful undertaking.

Schuster, C. I. (1983, June 27-July 1). The un-assignment: Writing groups for advanced expository writers. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English, Laramie, WY. ERIC Document ED 234 409

Schuster defends, and describes in detail, a group model for advanced expository writing classes. The group method allows writers to make a transition from school-sponsored to self-sponsored expression rather than follow the narrowing,

specializing focus of many technical writing classes. A large component of his peer group process is oral reading and oral responses. He feels his groups are effective because they consolidate four areas of rhetorical study--writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Peer groups also encourage writer ownership through self-generated assignments; inspire rising expectations among peer readers, improve writers' sense of sound and rhythm; help listeners develop short term memory skills; merge audience and writer and subject and response; and share the value of revising. Schuster details his exact method for running a peer group workshop at the advanced expository level.

Shannon, R. F., Jr. (1983). A small group, personal growth method for the teaching of writing. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 1714A (University Microfilms No. DA8324128)

Shannon reviews informal ethnographic research exploring a non-traditional composition approach for non-traditional freshman composition students in rural southern California. The approach included non-graded daily writing, positive feedback, freedom in paper length and topic, peer evaluation, instructor/student appointments, and activities to improve students' self-concept. This approach was compared to a traditional course. Students were given a pre-post usage test and wrote summaries at the end of the course. Shannon followed three students' progress (case studies), and saved spontaneous written comments by students regarding the course method. Students were reported as having improved in writing abilities and it was noted that small group work proved invaluable for creating an audience for students' work. No specific data was given.
(Reviewed from abstract)

Weiner, Harvey S. (1986, January). Collaborative learning in the classroom: A guide to evaluation. College English, 48, 52-61.

Weiner reviews research and theory in collaborative learning (especially that of Bruffee) and overviews the collaborative process. He discusses the need for evaluating this method in the classroom; such evaluations generally do not take place because procedures for doing so are underdeveloped. Evaluation of collaborative learning without a procedure will do more harm than good.

To discuss evaluation, Weiner details the multiple roles of the teacher in the collaborative classroom: task setter, classroom manager, and synthesizer. In summary, he offers eight guidelines (abbreviated here) that an outside evaluator should consider: 1) the quality of the task, 2) the social setting, 3)

the teacher's behavior, 4) the teacher's role, 5) the nature and quality of group reports, 6) the teacher's performance as a representative of the academic community, 7) the relationship of collaborative learning to the course design, 8) the teacher's knowledge of and commitment to collaborative learning. This article could be usefully read not only by evaluators but also by teachers who are beginning to design a collaborative course.

Ziv, N. D. (1983, March). Peer groups in the composition classroom: A case study. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the CCCC, Detroit, MI. ERIC Document ED 229 799

Ziv reports the results of an informal case study of peer groups in her freshman expository writing classes at New York University and Seaton Hall University. She trained students to respond to essays, emphasizing ideas rather than sentence level and lexical concerns. After providing training, she divided classes into peer groups of four or five students each. Students read papers aloud and used written and oral group comments to help them write a second draft; the second draft was turned in to the teacher who responded with written and oral comments. The final draft (3rd draft) was turned in to the teacher for grading.

The student peer groups developed patterns of making positive comments; making small talk (which Ziv defends as a necessary ice-breaking technique); making criticisms of content to which students did not respond with changes (these comments were very general); and making criticisms of form to which students did respond, resulting in many small changes in their papers. These categories stayed the same through the course although the third one, criticisms of content, improved and students learned to make content changes. The instructor continued to teach revising strategies during the semester.

Ziv found that problems occurred when the teacher attempted to offer draft suggestions to a writer which differed from the group's suggestion. The writer preferred the group to the teacher's suggestions which created grading conflicts. Ziv suggests that the teacher and peers not evaluate the same papers or that individual papers not be graded but be presented for an overall portfolio grade. Ziv also felt the shift in audience from teacher to peer became too real, eliminating student-teacher dialogue and substituting student-student dialogue even in a student-teacher situation.